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Disarmament Commission

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New York

Chairman: Mr. García ..... (Colombia)

The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

General exchange of views (*continued*)

Ms. Ramírez (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): On behalf of my delegation, and on my own account, I warmly congratulate Ambassador Andelfo García of Colombia and the other members of the Bureau on their elections at this session of the Disarmament Commission.

This session provides an appropriate framework for us to consider the important tasks before the international community. In an excellent article published in the April edition of *Current History*, Mr. Jack Mendelsohn alerted us to the danger of believing that the disappearance of the threat of nuclear war and the progress achieved in the sphere of disarmament and non-proliferation have made the items on our agenda any less important or less relevant.

To be sure, the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the opening for signature of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and the upcoming entry into force of the Convention on the prohibition of chemical weapons have strengthened the international community's determination to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Yet the START II treaty has not yet entered into force, and the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction lacks a verification protocol. Nor have negotiations begun on a cut-off convention to ban fissile materials.

Under the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the Antarctic Treaty, the southern hemisphere has become a nuclear-weapon-free zone. The region of Latin America and the Caribbean was a pioneer in identifying means to keep the region free of the scourge of nuclear weapons. Indeed, this year Latin America and the Caribbean are proudly and joyfully marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons In Latin America and the Caribbean — the Treaty of Tlatelolco. This was made possible by the efforts and initiatives of Mexico, by a long process of building mutual trust and by the resurgence of democratic institutions in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Now we note with satisfaction that other regions have also opted to shut out the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons, thus stripping those weapons of their legitimacy. In this connection, it is useful to recall that the Final Document of the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) reiterated the value of nuclear-weapon-free zones and their contribution to the strengthening of international peace and security.

Since the preparatory process for the 2000 NPT Review Conference is already under way, the international community should promote the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones, together with the strengthening of security guarantees by nuclear-weapon States.

The Argentine Republic favours measures to bolster regional and international peace and security, especially those that expand the machinery for conflict prevention, promote the non-proliferation of weapons of mass

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destruction and ensure the effective application of the system of the United Nations Charter.

The proliferation of regional conflicts and the resurgence of instability in various areas make it necessary for the international community to focus its attention on an area that gains less attention but that is the cause of equal concern: conventional weapons. Article 51 of the Charter enshrines the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence, which presupposes that States are entitled to buy or manufacture weapons with which to defend themselves. But States must make careful and moderate use of arms transfers, paying particular heed to the excessive availability of such transfers and their potentially destabilizing effects, especially at the regional level.

We therefore consider that there is a responsibility to exercise effective control over international arms transfers so as to contribute to United Nations efforts to reduce tension, resolve regional conflicts, halt the arms race and achieve disarmament. It would thus be useful for the media to focus their concern on these major issues. Two weeks ago, a prestigious seminar described the risks of the lack of adequate control of arms sales; today, in fact, *The New York Times* published an editorial underscoring these concerns.

Confidence- and security-building measures, especially transparency in the arms sphere, are thus of particular interest in terms of guaranteeing the effectiveness of preventive diplomacy that would ensure international peace and security. Here we must stress the importance of all unilateral, reciprocal and multilateral arms control measures.

Argentina firmly supports all measures or instruments that promote greater transparency in the arms sphere. Exchanges of information, in particular, are an important and relatively easily implemented system — so long as the information is made public through the United Nations Secretariat. Argentina also attaches great importance to the process built around the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms. Similarly, we support efforts to conclude regional security and confidence-building agreements, a commitment to regional and subregional integration processes, and the renunciation of the development of defensive-offensive capabilities posing a potential threat to neighbouring countries.

In this context, Argentina supports a conventional-arms balance in a region, with appropriate control and verification measures and an agreement that would further the common objective of retaining only military capabilities needed for defence and for the fulfillment of international commitments, always mindful of the interests of the countries involved.

The current transitional phase entails the adaptation and redefinition of the United Nations, of regional structures, of States and of institutions to correspond to the new international conditions. Dialogue and consultations must help bring about a convergence of the views on the basis of which the future security and disarmament system will be formed.

In this context, and as we have noted at previous substantive sessions of the Commission, we must carefully study the question of a fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. In the view of Argentina, before deciding to convene the special session, and after having carefully studied its financial implications, it would be advisable to ensure the proper preparation of the session and provide it with some real content so that we do not repeat past mistakes. Thus, the agenda would have to be balanced between nuclear and conventional disarmament. As to the date for a fourth special session on disarmament, we should be mindful of the timetable of other disarmament meetings so as to avoid any overlap in the consideration of these issues.

Three years before the turn of the twenty-first century, we must face the question of how the United Nations is to respond to the challenges of the next 100 years. Disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control continue to be of crucial importance on the international agenda. Maintaining multilateral efforts to address these issues is a major challenge.

Argentina is convinced that it is possible, by renouncing the use of force in the settlement of international conflicts and on the basis of respect for fundamental freedoms, democracy and human rights, to forge a plan for universal coexistence that will ensure the stability and development of mankind.

It will take the full commitment, practical participation, political will and courage of the entire international community to take the necessary decisions or order to create a different sort of climate.

In conclusion, I would like to say that the delegation of Argentina will lend all its support to the work of the Disarmament Commission with a view to pursuing tangible progress, as was achieved at past substantive sessions with the valuable document "Guidelines for international arms

transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991".

Ms. Arystanbekova (Kazakstan) (*interpretation from Russian*): I would like to associate myself with the congratulations being offered to you, Sir, upon your assumption of the important post of Chairman of the Disarmament Commission at this session. I would like to express my conviction that, under your skillful leadership, it will be successful and fruitful.

The delegation of Kazakstan has always with the greatest attention followed the important and serious questions inscribed on the agenda of the Disarmament Commission. The efforts of the international community to bring about a nuclear-free world and to strengthen international security have recently borne some fruit. The extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 1995 was an outstanding event in the area of strengthening the non-proliferation regime for weapons of mass destruction.

One of the most important international documents — the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty — was opened for signature last September. An international political consensus in favour of the permanent cessation of nuclear-weapons testing received tremendous support. While paying tribute to all the States that took part in the preparation and adoption of these historic decisions, we believe it is necessary to point to the significant contribution of my own country to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the cessation of the testing of this deadly weapon.

Kazakstan has had a policy of banishing nuclear weapons from the very first day we achieved independence. It has halted the testing of the deadliest weapon in the history of mankind on its territory and has closed once and for all the nuclear-test site at Semipalatinsk. The renunciation of all forms of nuclear weapons was a natural choice for a country that has suffered so much from nuclear tests, the consequences of which have had such a pernicious effect on the life and health of our people and on the ecological balance of vast areas of our country.

I would like to dwell on some items on the agenda of this session of the Disarmament Commission in further detail.

Article VII of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) and paragraphs 5, 6 and 7 of the Principles and objectives for nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament proclaimed at the 1995 Review and Extension Conference of the NPT established a sound legal foundation for creating new international nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of agreements freely entered into between the appropriate States for the purposes of strengthening peace and security on the global and regional levels.

Kazakstan believes that an important factor for all countries that have declared themselves nuclear-weapon-free zones is the undertaking by the nuclear Powers to observe the nuclear-free status of the zones and to provide guarantees of nuclear security to its States participants. As is known, such guarantees were given to Kazakstan in 1994 and are similar in content and juridical force to those enjoyed by the participants in nuclear-weapon-free zones. Nevertheless, Kazakstan has made an appreciable contribution to the cause of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and supports the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Asia.

As members know, a summit meeting of the Presidents of Kazakstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan was held in Almaty on 28 February 1997. The Presidents discussed problems of ecological security in central Asia. The Heads of State declared 1998 Environmental Protection Year in the Central Asian region under the aegis of the United Nations.

The Almaty Declaration was adopted at that meeting. It highlights the consensus of the signatory States of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons on the need for declaring Central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone. On the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the Semipalatinsk test site, the five Heads of State called upon all interested countries to support the idea of declaring central Asia a nuclear-weapon-free zone open to other regions.

The Declaration points to the efforts of the Central Asian States, which, despite serious economic difficulties, have been undertaking considerable efforts to improve the ecological situation in the Aral Sea basin, the Semipalatinsk test site and other areas affected by nuclear tests. They acknowledged the need to prepare a comprehensive programme of ecological security including the Aral Sea problem, to create a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia and to combat the leakage of nuclear technologies and raw materials.

The question of creating a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Asia was placed on the agenda of the international conference on the problems of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons to be held in Almaty from 8 to 11

September 1997 to mark the fiftieth anniversary of the beginning of operations at the Semipalatinsk test site.

I take this opportunity to express my gratitude for the support which was expressed in the statements made by the Group of States of the Non-Aligned Movement and a number of other countries at the recently-concluded first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in the Year 2000 for the idea of creating this zone in the Central Asian region.

Kazakstan supported resolution 51/45 C, entitled "Convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament", during the course of the work of the main part of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly in December 1996. I wish to stress the importance of achieving consensus with regard to its goals, agenda and date. We hope that this special session will yield positive results for progress in disarmament, arms control and matters of international peace and security.

Kazakstan notes with satisfaction the steady progress made in the control and reduction of conventional weapons, in particular those with excessively harmful and indiscriminate effects.

Destabilization of the situations in various parts of the world shows us that control of the spread of conventional weapons should be strengthened and is therefore a valuable instrument of regional security. In this context, we support the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms and view it as an extremely important component of such control.

The Disarmament Commission has before it some important decisions to take on strengthening international peace and security. We are ready to cooperate constructively with the delegations of the States Members of the United Nations in order to achieve our common goals.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): On behalf of my delegation, I would like to join previous speakers in extending my most sincere congratulations to you, Sir, on your assumption of the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission at its 1997 session. We have every confidence that your able leadership and broad experience in the field of disarmament will help guide the 1997 substantive session of the Commission to a particularly successful and productive outcome.

Allow me also to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their election and to thank Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann of Germany for his outstanding role during last year's session of the Commission.

My delegation is convinced that internationally recognized nuclear-weapon-free zones, established on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned, are an effective instrument to promote nuclear non-proliferation and disarmament and confidence-building, and thereby help to enhance global and regional peace and security. In this regard, my delegation welcomes the recent establishment and consolidation of nuclear-weapon-free zones in various regions of the world. Furthermore, we also encourage the initiatives to establish additional nuclear-weapon-free zones in other regions and hope that more such zones can be established in the near future.

My delegation is of the view, however, that, in achieving the denuclearization of a specific region, consensus should be reached beforehand among the countries concerned. Special consideration should be given to the unique circumstances of each region, including the elements of any security mechanism in operation there. Furthermore, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones should not impose restrictions on the exercise of rights recognized under international law.

My delegation would like to take this opportunity to refer to the efforts which we have made towards the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. In December 1991, the two Koreas signed, in full agreement, the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, which entered into force in February 1992. Under the Joint Declaration, both parties pledged not to test, manufacture, produce, receive, possess, store, deploy or use nuclear weapons. They also renounced the possession of nuclear reprocessing and uranium enrichment facilities in order to further enhance nuclear transparency on the Korean peninsula. The Declaration also provided for an effective verification regime through mutual inspection and the establishment of a Joint Nuclear Control Commission. However, it is a matter of regret that the Joint Declaration has not yet been implemented. We are convinced that the Declaration, if properly implemented, will serve as an effective means to ensure peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.

Since the end of the cold war, we have witnessed many remarkable achievements in non-proliferation and disarmament. Some of the most impressive gains have been

the indefinite extension of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, which has strengthened the global non-proliferation regime, and the successful conclusion of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, marking the fulfilment of the long-held aspiration of the international community to end nuclear-test explosions once and for all. In addition, the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production, Stockpiling and Use of Chemical Weapons and on Their Destruction, which provides for the elimination of a whole category of chemical weapons, is set to enter into force next week. Also encouraging is the progress being made in meetings of the Ad Hoc Group of States parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Development, Production and Stockpiling of Bacteriological (Biological) and Toxin Weapons and on Their Destruction. We hope that these meetings will very soon result in a legally binding verification protocol for the complete elimination of biological weapons.

The years since the end of the cold war have, indeed, brought many welcome changes. However, the international community still faces considerable threats to international peace and security. Some of the most pressing dangers include the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, the excessive accumulation of conventional weapons and a disconcerting lack of mutual trust in various regional trouble spots.

My delegation therefore believes that it is time for us to review the most critical aspects of the process of disarmament in the post-cold-war era and to further strengthen the international efforts towards the ultimate elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and the effective control and reduction of conventional weapons. In this regard, my delegation welcomes General Assembly resolution 51/45 C, by which the General Assembly decided to convene its fourth special session devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) in 1999. This will enable us to set the future course of action in the fields of disarmament and arms control and will help our consideration of related international security matters.

It is our view that SSOD IV should, in a balanced manner, address all aspects of the non-proliferation and disarmament of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction and conventional weapons, as well as the issue of transparency in armaments. We hope that a consensus can be reached on the objectives and agenda of SSOD IV in the course of our deliberations at this substantive session.

International peace and security are under threat, not only from weapons of mass destruction, but also from excessive and destabilizing accumulations of conventional weapons at a level beyond that which is considered legitimate for self-defence purposes. My delegation notes that the Agenda for Peace and its supplement stress the urgent need for practical disarmament. In this regard, we share the view that the international community should focus its attention on certain practical disarmament measures, such as the collection, control and disposal of arms, especially small arms and light weapons, as well as the demobilization and reintegration of former combatants, demining and conversion. We believe that a comprehensive and integrated approach is needed to ensure the maintenance and consolidation of peace and security in areas that have suffered from conflict, and thereby provide a basis for the effective rehabilitation and social and economic development of countries torn by conflict.

With regard to curbing illegal trafficking in conventional weapons, which is one of the most immediate problems that we need to address, my delegation is pleased to note that the Disarmament Commission, at its previous session, successfully concluded the guidelines for international arms transfers in the context of General Assembly resolution 46/36 H of 6 December 1991. We are convinced that these guidelines, the first code of conduct in this field, will contribute to enhancing transparency in international arms transfers and eradicating illicit arms transfers. However, in order for this positive new measure to be effective, each country should do its utmost to strengthen its relevant national laws, regulations and administrative procedures.

In the belief that greater transparency in armaments can improve confidence-building and security among countries, we regard the United Nations Register of Conventional Arms as an effective means to reduce mistrust, miscalculation and, consequently, military tension. In that context, my delegation strongly encourages those States which have not yet provided annual reports to the Register to do so at the earliest possible date. At the same time, we believe that we must continue our efforts to consolidate and further develop the Register if it is to be truly effective. We also encourage the opening of discussions at the regional level on the operation and development of the Register in order to initiate the confidence-building process among regional States.

In conclusion, I wish to assure you, Mr. Chairman, that my delegation is fully prepared to contribute to the successful outcome of the work of this Commission.

Mr. Adbel Aziz (Egypt): At the outset, I would like to extend to you, Sir, my delegation's warmest congratulations on your unanimous election to the chairmanship of the Disarmament Commission and to express to you my delegation's confidence that, under your capable guidance, the Commission will be able to fulfil successfully its mandate for this year. I would also like to congratulate the other members of the Bureau on their well-deserved elections to their posts.

On this occasion, I would also like to express our deep appreciation to Ambassador Hoffmann for his excellent chairmanship of the 1996 session of the Commission and to congratulate him on his new responsibilities in the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization.

The credibility of the work of the Disarmament Commission has been at stake for the past few years, due to the fact that the Commission has been unable to achieve concrete results in many subject areas, most notably in the nuclear disarmament sphere. With the exception of the adoption, during its last substantive session, of the guidelines on international arms transfers, the Disarmament Commission had no concrete results.

My delegation hopes that the increase in the duration of the Commission's session from two to three weeks, together with the inclusion of new and significant items on the agenda, namely "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned" and "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N", will give more impetus towards achieving positive results in the near future.

As the Conference on Disarmament has not yet been able to agree on its agenda, the importance of the work of the Disarmament Commission at this substantive session is even more significant. In this regard, Egypt reiterates the paramount importance it attaches to the establishment of an ad hoc committee on nuclear disarmament within the Conference. Our delegation in Geneva has worked constructively in this regard and has proposed a balanced mandate for the ad hoc committee. The efforts exerted within the Disarmament Commission and the Conference on Disarmament should complement each other, with the objective of ultimately achieving the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This is the utmost priority of the international disarmament agenda, as underscored by the first special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD I). This utmost priority, however, does not diminish the significance of other disarmament matters, most notably in the conventional sphere, which we believe to be important.

My delegation is pleased to see on the Disarmament Commission's agenda for the first time an item entitled "Establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned". The topicality of this issue is gains even more significance in the light of the results achieved at the recently concluded first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), which reaffirmed the conviction that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones freely arrived at among the States of the region concerned enhances global and regional peace and security.

In this regard, we welcome the recent establishment of two nuclear-weapon-free zones, in Africa and South-East Asia, and congratulate the parties to the Treaty of Tlatelolco on their celebration of the Treaty's thirtieth anniversary this year. The nuclear-weapon-free-zone seminar recently held in Mexico City, organized jointly by the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean (OPANAL) and the Government of Mexico, has certainly provided intellectual and practical input to further enhancing the concept. We look forward to a consolidated outcome of the seminar, which, we are sure, will enrich our consideration of this item of the agenda. Furthermore, I should like to welcome the initiative of the States of Central Asia to establish a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the region, as reflected in the Almaty Declaration of 28 February 1997.

The Cairo Declaration, adopted on the occasion of the signing ceremony for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Africa, emphasized that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones, especially in regions of tension such as the Middle East, enhances global and regional peace and security. This is a vivid testimony from the African States of the seriousness of the situation in the Middle East. Unfortunately, the Middle East is still lagging far behind. The existence in Israel — the only State in the region that has not acceded to the NPT and has not declared its intention to do so — of nuclear facilities that are not subject to full-scope International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and its operation of an ambiguous nuclear programme are self-evident causes of alarm among the

States of the Middle East. The 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference also recognized this alarming situation by adopting a package of three decisions and a resolution on the Middle East. That package constitutes the premise of the mandate of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference, and we expect further steps to be taken to ensure the implementation of the provisions of the resolution on the Middle East within the NPT review process.

We expect also that the deliberations of the Disarmament Commission on nuclear-weapon-free zones will lead not only to the formulation of guidelines, but should result in specific recommendations, based on practical assessments of already established zones, in order further to enhance the concept and to promote ongoing efforts to establish further nuclear-weapon-free zones, particularly in the Middle East, thus achieving a Southern Hemisphere that is a zone free from nuclear weapons as a significant step towards a nuclear-weapon-free world.

Egypt is among the strong supporters of the convening of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Our support is based on the need to reflect the fundamental changes in international relations following the end of the cold-war era and the emergence of a new world order based on cooperation, not confrontation, thus providing an atmosphere much more conducive to concentrating on disarmament efforts, particularly nuclear disarmament, within a well-defined time frame.

In our work on this topic, we should build on our achievements embodied in the final document of SSOD I, which constitutes a model to be followed in our preparations for SSOD IV, taking duly into consideration new developments and achievements. Particular reference should be made in this regard to paragraph 45 of the Final Document of the Tenth Special Session of the General Assembly, which states that

> "Priorities in disarmament negotiations shall be: nuclear weapons; other weapons of mass destruction, including chemical weapons; conventional weapons, including any which may be deemed to be excessively injurious or to have indiscriminate effects; and reduction of armed forces." *(resolution S-10/2, para. 45)*

We consider this the point on which we have to build — a point that would require the full positive political will of all parties, particularly the nuclear-weapon States.

Our endeavour in this regard should revolve around achieving the widest possible consensus on an agenda and dates in order to start our preparations within the Preparatory Committee, envisaged by the General Assembly to convene before the end of its fifty-first session. This necessitates, in our view, finalizing the work of the Disarmament Commission on this agenda item at this session and presenting recommendations to the General Assembly on the substance of the matter and on related procedures.

Another new item on our agenda is "Guidelines on conventional arms control/limitation and disarmament, with particular emphasis on consolidation of peace in the context of General Assembly resolution 51/45 N". There is no doubt that the topic emanates from the continued importance of regulating the flow of conventional arms. However, the inclusion of this item on the Commission's agenda should not be taken as overemphasizing the issue of small arms, which have been a subject for discussion in the Commission over the past few years, but should be seen within its natural dimensions.

The subject must be approached and tackled in a careful manner in order to avoid any duplication of work between the Commission and the work of the Panel of Governmental Experts on Small Arms and light weapons established by the Secretary-General. It should also be noted that this item touches on various aspects of the work of the United Nations as a whole, especially in transitional areas, from preventive diplomacy to peacekeeping to post-conflict peace-building. These are areas in which no concrete definitions have yet been agreed on in the United Nations. It would seem sensible, though, to restrict our consideration of the matter at this stage to a pure disarmament scope, keeping our distance from other areas that are not within the Commission's competence and that are dealt with in other appropriate and competent bodies.

Finally, we hope this substantive session of the Disarmament Commission will build constructively on the successes of the 1966 session, and to that end I assure you of my delegation's fullest cooperation.

Mr. Sychou (Belarus) (*interpretation from Russian*): First of all, Sir, I should like to congratulate you upon your election to your important and responsible post. We hope that, under your leadership, the Disarmament Commission will achieve positive results in the course of this session. In your efforts, you can count on cooperation from the delegation of Belarus.

On the threshold of the new century, the world community is faced with the immediate task of determining fundamental parametres of international order which take into account the interests of all countries and ensure them all equal security. To create this new system of international security, the nuclear Powers are working constructively on the global level to reduce nuclear arsenals with the ultimate goal of eliminating nuclear weapons, and the non-nuclear States are also taking concrete steps in their subregions and on the national level.

The global goal of complete and general disarmament has been effectively advanced by a number of recent events, some of which are mutually complementary, though they may at times diverge in their emphasis. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) was indefinitely extended in 1995. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty was opened for signature in September 1996. The Presidents of Russia and the United States signed the Helsinki Agreements on strategic stability, nuclear security and prospects for the third round of Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START III). We have also had the report of the Canberra Commission on the Elimination of Nuclear Weapons and new agreements on flank boundaries within the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. We are very close to the time — 29 April this year — when the Convention on Chemical Weapons will enter into force.

Among the obviously high-priority tasks for the near future is the beginning of negotiations on producing a multilateral convention on the prohibition of the production of fissionable materials for use in nuclear weapons and other nuclear explosive devices. Such a convention would put an effective halt to the qualitative improvement of nuclear weapons and to the arms race.

An important positive factor that answers to contemporary requirements is the inclusion within the proposed mid-term plan of the United Nations for the period 1998-2001 of such activities as the monitoring and appraisal of current and future trends in the realm of disarmament and international security and the identification of problems that either accompany the process of disarmament or are engendered by it. The latter include the economic and social consequences of disarmament, environmental damage and conversion — problems that have yet to be resolved by the international community.

In the field of international cooperation in disarmament for the immediate and mid-term, we believe it is a high priority to work on including in the draft code of crimes against the peace and security of mankind crimes relating to deliberate and serious harm to the environment. Also of particular importance is the expansion of regional efforts and initiatives in the realm of disarmament as an important element of preventive diplomacy and peace-building.

Allow me briefly to address the items on the agenda of this session of the Disarmament Commission. First, I would like to refer to nuclear-weapon-free zones. It is our belief that the creation of nuclear-weapon-free zones and the movement for establishing these zones in various regions have enjoyed wide support in the international community. Through the consolidation of the existing zones and the creation of new ones, we are seeing the gradual emergence of the contours and parametres of a global system of security for the next century that excludes the use of the atom for military purposes. Belarus has consistently supported the inclusion of this issue on the agenda of the substantive session of the Disarmament Commission in 1997 and beyond. The initiative of the Republic of Belarus to create a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central Europe was motivated by the same design. It was the logical development of our own practical steps in the sphere of nuclear disarmament. It is well known that, on 27 November 1996, the territory of Belarus was cleared of the last remaining strategic nuclear missiles, as a result of which the central European region became de facto free of nuclear weapons.

The President of the Republic of Belarus sent to the Secretary-General a special message on this topic (document A/51/708) which also set forth the initiative for creating in Central and Eastern Europe a space free from nuclear weapons. The creation of this space is of tremendous importance in the strengthening of trust among States of the continent and preventing the emergence of new demarcation lines in our region. This problem was the subject of an international conference held recently in Minsk on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central and Eastern Europe.

The Belarus delegation is pleased by the fact the initiative for creating the nuclear-weapon-free zone in Central Europe figured in the summary by the Chairman of the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2000 Review Conference of the States Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), as well as in other documents of the Preparatory Committee, which concluded its work just a few days ago. It is our belief that this idea will be further developed at this session of the Disarmament Commission, which, as it were, will be taking the baton and assuming the goal of a comprehensive

consideration of the whole range of problems in this area. And if the preparation of a treaty on a nuclear-weapon-free space in Central Europe is a result of these efforts, not only the European countries but the whole international community will stand to gain.

Nevertheless, we are not fixated on this problem alone. While we consider counterproductive the ambition to expand the geographical frontiers of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and while we attach particular importance to efforts to remove nuclear weapons from the territory of foreign military bases in order to limit nuclear arsenals to the territory of the nuclear States, we are also ready to hold consultations on building a balanced system of relations between Belarus and that important military bloc and to work for political, military and strategic equilibrium with all our partners.

We would like to see the atmosphere in Central Europe freed of cold-war mistrust, the confrontation of military blocs and the arms race, and become a seedbed for the strengthening of mutual understanding and trust among the European nuclear Powers in the next century.

The emergence of new lines of demarcation on the European continent would have a negative impact both on the situation there and in the world at large. It would also be viewed negatively in the Republic of Belarus, since we do not live in isolation and take a realistic view of changes in the world. Like any other State, we must adapt our policy to the conditions emerging in our region.

I should now like to refer to the question of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament. Speaking during the fifty-first session of the General Assembly as a sponsor of the corresponding resolution, Belarus views an important task of the fourth special session to be that of exchanging experiences, taking stock of disarmament negotiations in the post-cold-war period, and formulating of priority disarmament tasks on the threshold of the twenty-first century and for the longer term.

We welcome the proposal to conclude a treaty on nuclear security and stability, with the participation of all nuclear States and to proceed to an exchange of views on this question with interested States. The current problem is that of adapting the Treaty on Conventional Armed Forces in Europe to the new political and military circumstances, as well as the achievement of the substantial results in this area. Member States are lending their full support to the idea of preparing a legally binding international document that would provide guarantees against the use or threat of use of nuclear force against parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) that do not possess nuclear weapons. Among other proposals for the short term is that of convening a peace conference in 1999.

With regard to determining the mandate of the Disarmament Commission in accordance with the preparation of the fourth special session, we feel that the idea of basing ourselves on the recommendatory nature of the Disarmament Commission on this question is entirely appropriate. The taking of decisions is the prerogative of the special session's Preparatory Committee.

Belarus was a sponsor of the resolution adopted at the fifty-first session on the strengthening of peace through practical measures in the realm of disarmament. That resolution stresses in particular the role for comprehensive arms control as applicable to firearms and light weapons, enhancing trust, the demobilization and integration of former combatants, demining and conversion as factors in the maintenance and strengthening of international peace and security and promoting effective economic and social development.

Within the context of the issue of anti-infantry mines, Belarus would like to see the adoption of policies along the lines of the moratorium on the export of such mines to be instituted by the Republic by late 1997, as well as the definition of further policies in the light of real military and technological possibilities and the means for ensuring the security of our borders.

With regard to the problem of mine clearance as a whole, we wish to stress the preferability of considering this question in a broader context, not confined to that of peacekeeping operations, in order to avoid the undesirable involvement of the Disarmament Commission in a problem that falls within the competence of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations. In this regard, we also wish to recall the concrete proposals we have already heard to help mitigate the most significant manifestations of this problem in various areas: the creation of a central database on mine-clearance issues, to which all information on the problem of land mines will flow; the coordination of mine-clearance programmes and the development of national potentials in this area with regard to countries where such measures are being undertaken; the supplementation of the mandates of existing peacekeeping operations through the provision of mine-clearance assistance, including in peace agreements among parties to conflicts and provisions for joint mine-clearance activities; the creation of programmes to retrain

demobilized military personnel as mine-clearance experts; and so on.

Along with other countries, Belarus is contributing to the work of a group of intergovernmental experts on firearms. We played an eager role in the work of a number of other expert groups whose proposals we hope will promote success in the Disarmament Commission's work this year.

We believe that we will have further opportunities to acquaint participants in this session more fully with Belarus's approach to the entire range of questions on this session's agenda.

Mr. Mabilangan (Philippines): I would like at the outset to express my extreme satisfaction at seeing you, Sir, as Chairman of our Commission. We know first-hand not only of your skills in diplomacy and leadership, but also of your mastery of the subject matter of our Commission as well.

Please allow me also to thank your predecessor, Ambassador Wolfgang Hoffmann, for his tireless efforts at our last session. We wish him well in his new endeavours.

We have before us a full agenda. Arriving at this agenda was no mean feat. While my delegation would have prioritized the issue of nuclear disarmament, we welcome the current three substantive items on our agenda as a positive step towards developing a better atmosphere within which we can discuss nuclear disarmament today and in the future.

The Philippines has always emphasized that discussions such as those on which we will be embarking in the next three weeks should be made within the context of today's changed world. The changes have been many. In recent years, we have been witness to developments on the disarmament front that only a few scant decades ago were mere fervent hopes tempered by practical realities. Many of these changes were effected through multilateral efforts such as those of the Disarmament Commission and the United Nations in general. In that sense, the Disarmament Commission, as a multilateral forum with a unique mandate and universal participation, has a critical role to play in building on what has been achieved in the area of disarmament.

We must not forget, though, that many of the positive developments in the field of disarmament can also be credited to regional efforts and initiatives — efforts which, if necessary, should outpace broader multilateral development. In other words, it may be desirable in some instances for the regions and nations of the world not to wait for conclusive developments in disarmament in multilateral forums to move forward.

For example, States wishing to do so can create a nuclear-weapon-free zone or strengthen already existing ones without necessarily waiting for conclusive deliberations on this issue in multilateral forums. The outcome of the work of multilateral forums such as ours, susceptible to being politicized by extreme interests and prone to watered-down compromises, need not be a prerequisite to decisive action by States or groups of States to promote disarmament.

At last year's substantive session of the Disarmament Commission, my delegation expressed its extreme disappointment over the non-inclusion of nuclear-weapon-free zones on the agenda of the Commission. Our discussions and arguments last year over whether or not to include nuclear-weapon-free zones and in what form or formulation took up much of our time. But those discussions were very revealing of the particular international and regional interests and concerns of States on this issue. This may, in a sense, serve to make our current discussion of this issue more fruitful or, at the very least, very interesting. My delegation has specific views on this issue and will participate actively when it is discussed.

I touched briefly upon the function of multilateral forums when I discussed the role of the Disarmament Commission. Our second agenda item deals precisely with what could be an important and critical disarmament forum, a forum with the potential to prove the worth of the multilateral arena in moving forward on disarmament — that is, if given the chance.

My delegation has specific substantive views on the role of the fourth special session of the General Assembly devoted to disarmament (SSOD IV) and ideas for its agenda. In this regard, my delegation will participate actively in the deliberation on this issue. I would like, at this point, to discuss briefly the concerns of some delegations that may put at risk the critical opportunities and challenges of SSOD IV.

The concern over expense is a legitimate one. My delegation is convinced that not only is the expense well worth it, but that it can be kept within reasonable means. But I am aware that these points may not suffice in gaining consensus on this issue. In this regard, my delegation

suggests that we review the possibility of the Disarmament Commission studying how best to rationalize the length and duration of some disarmament-related meetings with a view to applying the savings towards holding SSOD IV and the meetings of its preparatory committee. My delegation would even go so far as to consider the possibility of forgoing a session or two of the Disarmament Commission and applying the savings to SSOD IV or devoting part or all of a substantive session to meetings of the SSOD IV a preparatory committee. We fully understand that it would be necessary to revisit the mandate of the Disarmament Commission as enshrined in the appropriate documents.

Please allow me to hasten to add that my delegation expresses this view with the highest respect for the Disarmament Commission and the particular and general importance and significance its respective members give it. This proposal should in no way be seen as giving any less importance to the Commission. We also understand that some may view this as not qualifying as a substantive issue for this session of the Commission.

The third issue before the Commission is one that bears directly on current problems and tensions in many regions. Practical measures are needed to reduce existing conflicts and to reduce potential ones. For those regions that enjoy peace and stability, engaging in and developing conventional-arms control, limitation and disarmament is a proven and sure way to maintain peace. In addition, aside from the direct benefit of enhanced security, the very exercise of addressing conventional arms concerns contributes to strengthening confidence, trust and political relations that translate to greater cooperation on other issues.

At this point, I would like to emphasize that, while there is a universal aspect to the problem of conventional-weapons control and disarmament, there are also regional and local facets to these problems that must be given due attention.

As with the other two issues before us, my delegation will participate actively when this issue is discussed.

The Chairman (*interpretation from Spanish*): There are no further speakers inscribed on my list. I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in exercise of the right of reply. I remind members of the Commission that General Assembly decision 34/401 provides that

> "The number of interventions in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation at a given meeting should be limited to two per item";
>
> "The first intervention in the exercise of the right of reply for any delegation on any item at a given meeting should be limited to 10 minutes and the second intervention should be limited to five minutes." *(decision 34/401, paras. 9 and 10)*

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The South Korean representative very carefully made mention some time ago of the non-implementation of the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This Declaration was signed by the North and the South, so when the South Korean representative said that this Declaration is not being implemented he tried to imply that our country is not implementing it. It is therefore my duty to exercise the right of reply to his statement. In fact, my statement is to give to the third parties a correct understanding.

After the Korean War, the United States introduced nuclear weapons into South Korea with the connivance of the South Korean authorities. Our country proposed in the 1970s and 1980s to turn the Korean Peninsula into a nuclear-weapon-free zone and demanded that the nuclear-weapon States guarantee it.

In 1992, the North and the South signed the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. However, it could not be fully implemented. Why? It is because the United States is providing a nuclear umbrella to South Korea and because, at the same time, the South Korean authorities begged outside forces to provide it with a nuclear umbrella.

I therefore think that the South Korean representative's argument is contradictory. We have learned from experience that the problem of nuclear weapons on the Korean peninsula can be solved solely between the United States and our country. In 1994, we signed the Framework Agreement with the United States of America.

The South Korean representative said that the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula is not being implemented. However, specifically speaking, his words do not coincide with the realities. We are now implementing the Framework Agreement and, through it, the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, I assure the South Korean

representative that when the Framework Agreement is implemented fully, South Korea will also benefit from it.

Mr. Choi (Republic of Korea): My delegation does not wish to respond point by point to the allegations made by the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Rather, I would like to express my delegation's deep regret at his comments on the Joint Declaration, which was signed by both sides in full agreement and entered into force in 1992. My delegation wishes to emphasize once again that the full implementation of the Agreed Framework, the International Atomic Energy Agency safeguards agreement and the Joint Declaration will greatly contribute to preventing nuclear proliferation, thereby fostering a climate conducive to peace and stability on the Korean peninsula. In this context, we sincerely hope for the cooperation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, so that the commitments made under those agreements can be faithfully implemented as soon as possible.

Mr. Kim Chang Guk (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): Once again, I would like to explain to the representative of South Korea that, first, the nuclear issue on the Korean peninsula could be completely resolved between the United States and our country. South Korea has no say at all on the issue of nuclear weapons; it has no prerogative on this matter. Secondly, we are now implementing the Agreed Framework, which was signed by the United States and our country. If the Agreed Framework were fully implemented, the provisions of the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula could also be fully implemented. The South Korean authorities should not, therefore, hinder the implementation of the Agreed Framework, but cooperate for its fulfilment.

The meeting rose at 4.25 p.m.